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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 002531

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MASS](#) [ENRG](#) [YM](#) [MARITIME SECURITY](#)

SUBJECT: DCM VISITS MUKALLA, ENCOURAGES SUPPORT FOR COAST GUARD EXPANSION

REF: A. SANAA YM 311523Z

[1](#)B. EAST BAHRA 050639Z

[1](#)C. SANAA YM 071445Z

Classified By: DCM Nabeel Khoury for reasons 1.4 b and d.

[1](#)1. (C) On August 30, DCM visited the eastern port city of Mukalla to encourage regional support for the planned expansion of the Yemeni Coast Guard (YCG). In meetings with the Hadramaut governor, MOI Chief of Security, and Eastern Military Region Deputy Commander, DCM stressed the importance of establishing new Coast Guard bases within the next several years as a means to combat smuggling and encourage economic development in the Hadramaut governorate. While voicing support for increased YCG operations, regional leaders also expressed concern that opposition from well-connected individuals could hinder expansion. Office of Military Cooperation (OMC) Chief, a UK navy representative, and a senior YCG official also accompanied DCM.

Hadramaut Governor: Coast Guard Urgently Needed

[1](#)2. (C) Governor Abdulqadir Hilal expressed support for YCG expansion into the Hadramaut region, saying an increased security presence was needed to combat pervasive SA/LW smuggling along the mostly unregulated coastline. Currently, he continued, we must rely on voluntary information provided by fishermen to monitor illicit activity. Hilal hoped the YCG bases could be completed in the near future.

[1](#)3. (C) DCM thanked him for his support and explained that a technical assessment would be the next step to determine suitable base locations. Hilal expected the public would be receptive to a YCG presence, but anticipated certain "technical problems" with establishing the bases and expanding patrols. DCM anticipated political challenges could be overcome, stressing that President Saleh already issued direct orders to MOI and MOD to support base construction. The YCG expansion plan must be implemented, he continued, and should not be derailed by vested individual interests. (Note: "Technical problems" was a tongue-in-cheek reference to the powerful Eastern Region Military Commander, BG Mohammed Ali Mohsen, who is reportedly opposed to YCG expansion (ref A.)

MOI Security Director: We Want Boats Now!

[1](#)4. (C) Hadramaut Director of Security BG Ahmed Mohammed Al-Hamdi looked forward to YCG's arrival, saying limited resources prevent the control of pervasive SA/LW smuggling and illegal immigration. Al-Hamdi agreed that the expansion plan must be implemented and assured the DCM that YCG would have his full support. Hadramaut is ready now, he added, saying the governorate could welcome the immediate deployment of ships instead of waiting for the technical assessment to be completed. The Navy warships currently patrolling the area are "too heavy," Al-Hamdi complained, saying that light YCG patrol boats would greatly improve coastal security.

[1](#)5. (C) Royal Navy Representative Giles Hatch stressed the need for coordination between all security authorities, saying any successful attempt to thwart smuggling requires a unified effort between coastal and land based security forces. Al-Hamdi expressed satisfaction with the current state of coordination with the Navy, citing the success of joint operations during the May national day celebration in Mukalla. He also said the presence of representatives from the various military and civilian organizations tasked with security at the MOI operations center in Mukalla helps facilitate information sharing. (Note: While national day celebrations were held without incident, the joint YCG-Navy security operation was marred when the Navy, according to sources, intentionally rammed a YCG vessel.)

Deputy Regional Commander: Welcome CG Brothers, but

[1](#)6. (C) Deputy Commander of the Eastern Military Region, BG Naser Al-Thahry, a last minute replacement for Commander Ali

Mohsen who traveled to Sanaa, said the military welcomed cooperation with the YCG and would provide any assistance necessary to establish new bases. "We will support YCG," he said but pointed out the "excellent" security measures established by MOD to safeguard the Canadian Nexen terminal in Mukalla (ref B) following the October 2002 Limburg attack. Al-Thahry said MOD did not oppose YCG expansion, but warned that weather conditions created "real" problems with completing the plan. (Note: MOD officials are jealous of the foreign assistance to the YCG (under MOI leadership) and worry about having additional scrutiny of some of their own illegal activities on the coast.)

17. (C) DCM emphasized the importance of completing the expansion plan, saying the security of the country was too important to allow bureaucratic or personal interests to block the plan's implementation. No one organization can protect the border alone, he continued, making coordination, not hoarding of authority, essential. OMC Chief promised to work with the Regional Commander and MOD to improve the Navy's capacity as well.

Comment

18. (C) DCM's trip followed a successful OMC visit to Shabwa governorate, another proposed site for YCG expansion. Given past experience with local opposition to new YCG bases in Hodeida (ref C), the trip provided a valuable opportunity to demonstrate the seriousness of USG support for the expansion plan. While the positive reception was encouraging, the reported opposition of Commander Ali Mohsen, a powerful political player with vested economic interests across the region, will likely be the biggest potential roadblock to expanding the YCG's responsibility for maritime security.

19. (C) Post will continue to push the ROYG at the highest levels to secure MOD support for YCG expansion. An increased YCG presence along the largely uncontrolled Hadramaut coastline would be a significant step forward in stemming SA/LW smuggling. In addition to smuggling, a secure coastline is essential to protecting the oil rich region from an economically devastating terrorist attack, especially with the planned construction of a LNG terminal 150 km west of Mukalla.
Krajeski